**US 'snub'**

"The representatives of some European Union countries, NAM [Non-Aligned Movement], and some representatives of the five-plus-one [world powers] have been invited to visit our nuclear sites," foreign ministry spokesman Ramin Mehmanparast told reporters.

He said the invitation was part of the Islamic republic's attempt to demonstrate "co-operation with the IAEA", referring to the UN nuclear watchdog, the International Atomic Energy Agency.

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**It's a clever ploy, but it's not a substitute for Iran's responsibilities to the IAEA”**

Philip J Crowley

US State Department spokesman

China, a close economic ally of Iran, has confirmed it was among the invitees, but foreign ministry spokesman Hong Lei did not say whether any of its diplomats would go.

Asked specifically whether a US representative would be invited, Mr Mehmanparast said in Tehran: "The list of the countries invited for the visit will be unveiled when it is finalised."

But [**the New York Times reports that the invitation has "pointedly snubbed" the United States**](http://www.nytimes.com/2011/01/04/world/middleeast/04tehran.html), citing European diplomats close to the negotiations.

Washington, which has been spearheading the campaign for sanctions against Iran, swiftly dismissed the offer.

"It's a clever ploy, but it's not a substitute for Iran's responsibilities to the [International Atomic Energy Agency] IAEA," Mr Crowley told the New York Times.